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FORMER BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOL TEACHER SENTENCED TO 50 YEARS FOR PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Orlando, Florida - U.S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that U.S. District Judge Mary S. Scriven today sentenced Berne Schmidkoffer (age 65, of Cocoa Beach) to 50 years in federal prison for producing and distributing child pornography. The court also ordered Schmidkoffer to pay \$300,000.00 in restitution to the victim.

Schmidkoffer pleaded guilty on August 24, 2009. According to his plea agreement and the facts adopted by the Court at sentencing, investigators received a CyberTip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) regarding an image of child pornography that had been uploaded on April 11, 2009. After determining that the image had been uploaded by an e-mail address that belonged to Schmidkoffer, a search warrant was executed at Schmidkoffer's residence on June 19, 2009. A forensic examination of Schmidkoffer's computer resulted in the discovery of child pornography that Schmidkoffer had produced of a six-year old child. Schmidkoffer is a former Brevard County school teacher.

This case was investigated by the Crimes Against Children Task Force of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Cocoa Beach Resident Office. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney

Carlos A. Perez.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

The investigation that led to this case was part of Operation Predator, a nationwide ICE initiative to identify, investigate and arrest those who prey on children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign-national predators whose crimes make them deportable. Launched in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 12,800 individuals through Operation Predator. ICE encourages the public to report suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-347-2423. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.